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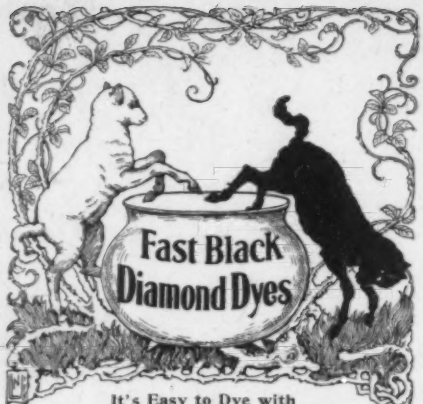

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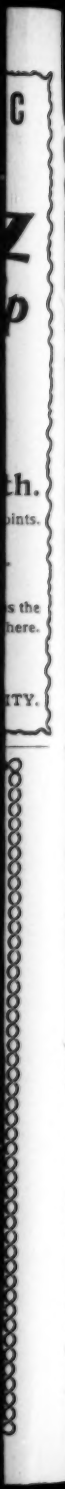

The Black Cat

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The Clock That Went Crazy.

BY LOUISE BETTS EDWARDS.

IT was an event that could have occurred only in Corinne.

The town clock of Corinne had a history which had never been written up, for the reason that the enterprising writers for Northern newspaper syndicates had one flaw in their armor of omniscience. They had never heard of Corinne, which, although a growing manufacturing village, was not yet important enough to have a place on the map of the United States. When aristocratic old Pierre de Viguers, ninety years ago, built a parish church with a towering clock (no pun intended) opposite his now half-ruined manorial estate, he would have had apoplexy at the idea that the ponderous timepiece would some day be the regulating center of a busy little town of toilers,— not in the rice field, not in the cotton plantation, but in the cotton mills. As a matter of fact he did have apoplexy, but it was from good living, not from disturbing visions of the future. Now the good Pierre was dust, the plantation built up into streets, the parish church burned down, and on the uninjured tower was grafted a tiny chicken coop called the "town house," because the clock was called the town clock. And that clock —

"It's not the clock that's crazy," succinctly said "'Squer"

Viguers, the village lawyer, when Henderson, superintendent of the mills, told him the tale that was circulating among the negro operatives.

"Then who is?"

"You, if you believe such gammon and spinach. Have you seen this marvel yourself?"

"No," said Henderson. "But I shall stay up to-night and watch. So will all the rest of Corinne, I imagine."

"It changes before you can wink your eyes, mammy says. It isn't only the hands that move, it's the figures, so that it's all sorts of time at once." Thus, with some awe, spoke Lucile de Viguers, the last of that decaying line,—a lovely, ignorant child, with the manners of a duchess and the education of a housemaid. In a gown of calico from his own mills, she was more charming to Henderson than all the well-dressed beauties of the North, — ay, and of the South, East, and West added to it. Her father half frowned, half smiled.

"The negroes fill her head with nonsense," he said to Henderson. "I shouldn't have left her to them so much, but what's a wifeless man to do?"

"What, indeed?" said Henderson, to Lucile,— at least his glance was pointed at her, and her blush at him. As she settled her somewhat unsubstantial little person beside her father on the broad window-seat, he ruffled her hair fondly.

"What does Uncle Ashur say, honey, about the clock? He surely has some remarkable explanation of its goings on."

"Uncle Ashur hasn't seen it yet. He's been holding a revival at Merton Courthouse, but he comes home to-night."

"Too much revival is what is the matter with Corinne," said the squire impatiently. "The people have heard so much about judgments, and signs, and that sort of thing, that they're ready to believe —"

"There!" shrieked Lucile, clutching the arm nearest her, which opportunely was that of Henderson. "It did it!" And Henderson also uttered an exclamation, an echo of the inarticulate sound, half groan, half scream, that rose from the crowd assembled half a block away on a patch of grass which Corinne called "the town yahd." Women sobbed and swayed, trying hard to faint;

men turned their hats meditatively in their fingers, saying, "'Sho!" and trying hard to appear composed. The hands of the clock, which a moment ago had marked fifteen minutes past ten, had suddenly turned a swift pirouette round the dial face — not once only, but twice and thrice, and so quickly that the dazzled eye counted dozens of hands instead of a single pair. Then, with equal suddenness, the movement stopped, leaving people rubbing their eyes. The clock looked placidly at them with its big, benevolent, white face, as a frisky old cat dares any one to say that it was recently executing kittenish capers. The time indicated was sixteen minutes past ten.

"Exactly traversed its own circle, by Jove!" breathed Henderson.

"I didn't see it," said Squire Viguers, putting a tardy head out the window. "Believe you, Henderson? Of course; if I didn't, I would believe my own child. The clock's old and out of order, that's all —" ignoring the dry smile suddenly evoked on the other man's face. "I'm going down into the crowd," he finished, and hastily suited the action to the word.

But the clock had repented of its folly, it seems, and not the squire's own cheap but eminently reliable silver watch pushed the moments along with more decorum and accuracy than did the town clock of Corinne for the next two hours. The crowd, well mixed as to color and social standing, yawned, stood first on one foot, then on the other, glared disappointedly at the clock, and whiled away the creeping moments by rehearsing the tale of its eccentricities.

"Du'in' de day hit kindeh lays low," impressively stated one sable wiseacre. "Nobuddy ain' nebber been late to wu'k by it, has yo' yearn tell? No; if dat dar clock's got cunjur', hit's on'y night cunjur'."

"Has yo' seen it befoh to-night, Dave Brice?" asked a neighbor.

"'Deed I has, an' actin' queerer dan to-night. Why, de secon' time de figgers was dancin' Juba all ober de face, an' de pointers er whirlin' an' chasin' an' teetotummin' after dem. I tells yo', Unc' Ashur am right, an' sumpin's bounter happen in Corinne."

But the moment dragged on without excitement, and the crowd

thinned, and the remaining constituents discussed the absurdity of remaining, and Unc' Ashur, who had joined the group, said Corinne had had its warning now. Uncle Ashur was an aged negro preacher, deeply devout, deeply ignorant, and deeply impressed with the wickedness of the village to which he ministered. Then, just as the squire had made up his mind to return to the very humble village dwelling which was now all that was left of the De Viguers property, the clock made a face, — that was the way Unc' Ashur afterwards described it, — and the hands were jerked violently about, from twelve to three, from three to ten-thirty, thence to two-seventeen, thence to eight-forty, with an utterly bewildering inconsequence, then stopped with the same suddeness as before. The squire was indignant.

"Sprague is trying to be funny," he said sternly. "He's working the machinery about, that's what he's doing." Sprague, a white man of some standing in the town, had for years taken charge of the clock, sleeping in a little room at the foot of the tower stairs.

"I'd got to have a pretty long string, squire," said a voice at his elbow. Sprague was almost at his side.

"The thing needs repairing, then," said the squire, thankful that Henderson was not by to seize on the imbecility of the remark.

"Cleaned and oiled her yesterday," said Sprague. "She's in perfect working order — Hollo, Unc' Ashur, did it scare you?"

For Uncle Ashur's face was almost as gray as his own wool. He rocked his trembling body back and forth, with his hands to his face, to hide the goblin clock from his eyes. Some emotion stronger than fright — plainly although that was written on his dusky features — shook him from head to foot, and he was muttering to himself, "Hit's come, shore nuff. I didn' b'lieve hit wu'd."

"What's come?" asked Sprague, who knew the old man's superstitions well enough to anticipate the answer.

"De Lawd's judgment, come to C'rinne! Hyah, yo' all!" raising his still powerful voice to recall the stragglers who were leaving, "doan' tink yo'll 'scape the wrath to come thataway! Yo' jus' stan' still an' lissun —" which they meekly did, their

numbers augmented from moment to moment by fresh arrivals, many of them in dishabille, having been recalled from preparations for a night's repose by the attraction of Uncle Ashur's preaching.

"Yo' yeard what I done tole yo' las' week at de revival, yo' sinnehs of Corinne!" he shouted, his face working with excitement and genuine terror. "I tole yo' if yo' di'nt t'row away yo'se vanities an' inickerties, yo' wu'd get er wahnin' f'um above, an' heah hit is." Almost simultaneously with his words the hands of the clock gave a convulsive jerk, then returned to their original position. Uncle Ashur's hearers groaned, and seemed oppressed with their sins.

"Yes, yo' groans," continued their mentor severely, "but yo' doan give up what causes signs an' wonders in de skies." ("Hit's de clocks, not de skies," interpolated one wit, but was hustled and jostled into silence.) "Yo' knows what to do: stop yo' cahd playin', an' yo' quer'lin', an' yo' gittin' yo'sse'fs drunker'n ole fader Noah. Stop adohnin' ob yo' po' silly bodies wid a judgment hangin' ober dem." ("Dat's right," loudly agreed one of his dusky hearers, who was very nearly in that state when beauty is said to be most adorned.) "Gib up yo 'gole watches an' yo' silk gownds an' yo' bracelets an' breastpins wid big cullud stones in 'em, an' yo' srahch' sleebes lak gas balloons. I'se had de wahnin', an' I passes it on to yo'. Sumpin' will happen, if we all doesn't tek keer!"

Leaving him still haranguing, and apparently making some impression, De Viguers entered his house, and sent the round-eyed Lucile off to bed, while he discussed with Henderson the probable meaning of the clock's vagaries. Henderson was of the opinion that somebody was playing a trick, and must be stopped.

"It will demoralize the factories," he said. "All the hands, instead of working, will be out on the curbstone watching that blamed clock."

"Sprague's not doing it," said the squire. "He was down in the crowd with the others, as puzzled as I."

"He may have an accomplice in the tower, just the same, working the weights and wires."

"He's working them by magic, then," said De Viguers dryly,

"for no mortal man could jerk them around with that lightning rapidity. And what would be his object?"

"Give it up," said Henderson. The two men agreed, none the less, on a plan of action for the following night. Then, however, it rained torrents, so that the crowd of watchers could not assemble in the square, and as the few unambitious street lights were far below the level of the face of the clock, it was impossible to pierce the darkness and the mist clearly enough to tell whether or not the hands were moving at the rate of sixty minutes to the hour, or "sixty hours to the minute," as Sprague, the clock-keeper, declared they had done on the previous night.

Instead of being a relief, however, the suspense only increased the terrors of the ignorant majority among Corinne's four hundred inhabitants. Uncle Ashur held a small meeting in his house, which Lucile's mammy reported as highly productive of penitence. "Dey sw'arin' off f'um eberyting wicket dey ebber done," she said. "Dey goanter gib up all dey vanities, — dey banjos, an' fiddles, an' joolry, an' sinful adohnments, — an' Unc' Ashur he goanter mek er big bonfiah in de sq'ah, an' buhn dem when he git enuff."

"I'll have something to say about that," said the squire.

When the light of a clear dawn lit the face of the clock, and found it perfectly accurate in its indications, and decorous as to behavior, it also found a line of watchers already assembled on the curb. As Henderson had predicted, no one worked that day. He threatened fines, dismissal, everything; but curiosity was stronger than any other influence with the happy-go-lucky Africans, and the mill machinery stood idle.

So did the machinery of the clock, whose insanity seemed strictly nocturnal in its nature. Just at dusk the clock-keeper, Sprague, was surprised at being seized at each arm by two firm hands, as he was standing giving his view of affairs to an interested knot of loungers on the tavern stoop.

"I want you to come with us, Sprague," said De Viguers. "We are going to spend the night with you in the tower, and have it well guarded on the outside, and see what goes on inside there."

To their surprise, and somewhat to their disappointment,

Sprague made no objection. In fact, he frankly admitted he would liever than not have company inside that plaguey place, now that such queer things were happening. "I've heard of spooks ringing church bells, but never of their monkeying with clocks before."

Collecting a guard for the tower door seemed, however, impossible. Not a negro could be induced to go near the door of the haunted tower. "Debbils," "ghosteses," and "angels ob de Lawd" might have the place to themselves, so far as the inhabitants of Corinne were concerned; they would not venture near the threshold. The educated element declared themselves unafraid, but not deeply enough interested in the matter to pass an uncomfortable night in the open air. Goaded by the taunts of De Viguers, however, a sufficient number of volunteers was raised to surround the tower, and they were sworn to permit no man, woman, child, or ghost to go either in or out.

Henderson and the man he was anxious to have for a father-in-law went up with Sprague while he wound up the clock exactly as he had done, once in every eight nights, for years. Henderson scrutinized its machinery closely, and declared it all right, so far as he could see.

"All right!" said Sprague testily. "Would she go on all day reg'lar as clock-work, as the saying is, if she wasn't all right? It isn't her works that's out of kilter, it's something that ain't to be understood by you nor me."

Having explored the tower, and convinced themselves that no one else was on the premises, Sprague's two companions settled themselves for a night's vigil. The hours dragged on uneventfully, and each rated the other for his drowsiness. They heard the heavy, booming strike of the clock, they watched the steady swing of its pendulum for hours, and exchanged significant glances. The "manifestations" ceased, evidently, when there was surveillance from inside.

There was a little window half way down the tower stairs, and here they sat and, unseen, watched the crowd assembled outside. The window did not open, so they could only see, not hear.

"I declare, Viguers," said Henderson suddenly, "those fools are going on just as they always do. Look at Ashur screaming and

pointing and,—by George, a woman's fainted, and they are all wringing their hands and leaping up. What's that pounding at the door? Go down, Sprague, and see!"

But Sprague was too slow, and De Viguers was at the foot of the stairs before him, just as the guard burst in the flimsy fastenings of the door. "Has that infernal clock been carrying on again?" he gasped, and would have rushed out to see, but that the guard held him back, and sternly demanded, "What you been doing to it up there?"

The three men stared at their accusers for a moment, then the whole party, with one accord, clambered panting up the stairs—but too late, for the pendulum was swinging sedately, the whole machinery apparently in its usual state. Going outside, they perceived that the disturbance had stopped.

"*The thing's possessed!*" said the vexed and baffled Henderson.

Of course there was nothing supernatural about it, though every fool in Corinne might think so; but who was playing the trick? and how was he playing it, and why? "Pure malice," explained the latter riddle; but nothing explained the others, even when Henderson had a scaffolding rigged up against the tower, and ascended it himself, since no one else could be found brave enough to examine the face of the clock. Uncle Ashur, who seemed, if anything, more terrified than his followers, endeavored to withhold him from this.

"Doan' yo' tech dat ar clock, Mas' Hen'erson," he entreated. "Lak as not yo' fall daid befoh ouh eyes. Hit am cunjur', I tells yo' hit am."

"I thought you said it was a warning from heaven?" asked Henderson, glancing somewhat narrowly at the old man, who seemed filled with an unaccountable confusion and distress.

"I doan' know nuttin' 'bout hit," he said stumblingly. "We's all sinnahs, an' doan' know nuttin'. But I wouln' tech dat clock, sah, I suttinly wouldn'."

Henderson, who had undertaken the thing merely as a forlorn hope, was scarcely surprised to find nothing suspicious about the face of the clock. Indeed, as Sprague had said, was not the clock all right? Did it not keep perfect time, even at night? when,

however madly and incomprehensibly the hands might spin about, they resumed business at the correct interval of space when their maniacal dance was over.

De Viguers sulkily gave the thing up, declaring it an optical illusion which had descended upon the whole of Corinne. The town lapsed for a few days into a state of bewilderment, during which nothing was done to solve the mystery, which now had continued for nearly a week. The factory activities were at a standstill; a shadow hung over the town, an atmosphere of the uncanny, and little else was talked of but the weird changes of countenance of the Crazy Clock. Individuals with tropical imaginations claimed to have been waked up in the dead of night with a creepy feeling, and, glancing out of the window, to have beheld a pair of great owlish eyes staring out of its white face. They even went so far as to have seen the face of "er grinnin' debbil" taking the place of its usual semblance. The small minority of educated men were in favor of sending to some big city for a detective to probe the matter, but Henderson emphatically opposed this. "They'd laugh at us," he said; "first, because they didn't believe us, then — when the whole thing comes to light — because we were so dense. We don't want any outside smarties solving our mysteries. *I'm* bound to solve this!"

Henderson had his reasons for taking such responsibilities upon himself. For the night before, Lucile de Viguers, with white, set little lips, and a deadly earnestness in her eyes, had broken her engagement with him.

"You and papa think as you believe best," she said, half tremblingly, "but I must think as *I* believe best, and I feel about that clock as mammy and Uncle Ashur do. I think it is a warning that we ought to give up our follies and our wickedness and turn ourselves to doing right."

"And I am a folly, Lucile, or a wickedness?"

"Don't talk so!" with a quivering lip. "It is only that you are the dearest thing on earth to me, and — and I have no fine clothes or jewelry or other treasures to renounce," — as, poor little soul, she had not,— "so it — must be — you." If the way she drooped her head and faltered out those last words between tears had led Henderson to doubt the firmness of her intention,

he was wofully undeceived. In vain he stormed against the superstition — ignorance — imbecility — of those who had turned her pretty young head with such ideas; she was tearfully unbending, and he went away grinding his teeth and swearing he would bring the crazy clock to its right mind, and the crazy people of Corinne to theirs.

There was no use appealing to De Viguers from Lucile; only reluctantly reconciled to her choice of a Northern husband, he would refuse to coerce her in any way. So, without telling the trouble which weighed on him, the forlorn lover urged the lawyer to begin the work of investigating anew.

"It makes me too mad," said De Viguers morosely. "To be foiled by an idiotic clock face a hundred years old! Henderson, do you think there *was* any one in the tower that night?"

The other shook his head. "The tower's all right, and so is the man that keeps it. I'll tell you, though, whom I suspect, for lack of a better, and am going to watch — Uncle Ashur."

The squire stared. "Uncle Ashur! and I thought you were the one man in Corinne who was not crazy. How could that good, illiterate, slightly doddering old fellow carry on a trick that successfully fools men like you and me? And why should he?"

"For purposes of revenue. How many silver watches and silk gowns do you suppose the old chap has in his hands now?"

De Viguers started. "Henderson, you haven't lived here all your life as I have, and known Uncle Ashur's character. He is absolutely honest and upright. Then, too, do you think he could act such terror as he has displayed over this affair?"

"I don't think anything," said Henderson dejectedly. "I'm as much in the dark as you. Let's go to Uncle Ashur's house and try what talking will do."

Uncle Ashur lived on the verge of the village, in a house little more than a cabin. There was no answer to his visitors' knock, but sounds from within told them he was there.

"The old man's *crying*, I verily believe!" said De Viguers. In fact, a series of loud sobs or muffled howls of anguish could be plainly heard. To their repeated knock, he called out huskily: —

"Yo' ain' comin' in, yo' ain', while Ashur's guter bolt on his do'!"

"That won't be long," said Henderson with set teeth, battering his shoulder against it. "Open!" he called.

"Whar dem tings, yo' white debbil?" called Ashur in reply, starting up in terror as the door gave way and the two men entered.

"O Mas' Hen'erson, I din' know hit war yo'! O Mas' Viguers, dey is all gone, an' I has been traffickin' wid de debbil!" and he frantically pulled at his scant white wool, a picture of despair and misery.

"Now just look here, Uncle Ashur," said Henderson, with a great effort at calmness; "tell us about it, and we'll get your things back, wherever they are. But tell us first what you have had to do with that clock."

The old man fairly groveled before him. "I'se been traffickin' wid de debbil," he piteously repeated. "Now he done tek de tings away, an' he tek ole Ashur nex'."

"Things — you mean the articles you were going to burn in the bonfire?"

"Yes; all de vanities an' fribberlossities of de wu'l' dat I war goin' to buhn! Mas' Hen'erson, I tought it war er angel, I did, reely. Yes, suh, I'll tell yo' all about hit, on'y please, suh, get dem back. Yo' know I hel' er gran' revival heah las' month? Dey was clost on t'ree hun'red dere, 'cludin' white folks an' cullud come ober f'um Merton Co'thouse."

"Yes."

"Well, among odder tings I 'zorts dem to gib up all dere vanities an' fribberlossities of dis wu'l' — dere banjos an' gole rings an' fine dresses dey spend all dey earnin's in de mills foh. I tole 'em dey'd get er wahnin' ef dey din't. De nex' day I war walkin' in de woods jus' at dusk when er white man come sudden f'um behine er bush en say, 'Ashur, does yo' want er sign to skeer all de people an' mek 'em do as you done tole 'em?'

"I was took so aback I jus' say, 'Yas, suh.' Hit got darker ebery minute.

"'Well,' he say, 'yo' mine me an' yo' shell have er sign. Gedder all de tings dey gibs yo', an' put 'em in de place I tells yo', an' after while you shall buhn dem in er consumin' fire,' he says, an' af'erwards I 'member he laugh behine he han'.

"'G'long,' I says. 'Who yo' be, ter mek er sign?'

"'One ob de Lawd's angels,' he says, berry sof'. 'If yo' doubts de sign, jus' look at de town clock ob Corinne, one week f'um to-night.' Den he walks off, an' I runs home, skeered."

"Where did he tell you to put them?" asked De Viguers abruptly.

"Yo' gran'fader's ole house, Mas' Viguers, — de ole tummle-to-pieces Viguers house op'site de clock. I steal dere at night, an' puts em in de kitchen lak he tole me — dough I awful skeered sometimes foh feah it haunted; I tink I heah noises, an' I tink I see lights in de sullah — "

De Viguers had jumped up, and made for the door. "Where are you going?" cried Henderson.

"To that house, of course," was the reply, and Henderson had to hold him back.

"Man, what are you thinking of? You won't find your bird there when his booty's flown. The railroad station at Merton Courthouse is the place to go; they only run three trains a day, and perhaps he started late enough to miss the four-fifty."

Little was said in the frantic drive from Corinne to Merton Courthouse, the nearest railroad station, but the hired hack-horse's back was lashed in a way to grieve the S. P. C. A. I am afraid the mind of Henderson, the driver, dwelt less on the prospect of possibly restoring the stolen chattels to Unc' Ashur than that of discovering the already half-surmised secret of the Crazy Clock. The shriek of a whistle, as they neared the station, — on whose platform they could by the dim lights discern a man's figure, — nearly maddened the three pursuers, who, in turn, nearly maddened the horse.

"For Richmond, Washington, and all points North!" called the conductor, as the train slowed. One quick, guilty, backward glance showed the unknown man that three other men were precipitating themselves from a carriage and dashing toward him. The next moment he sprang into the last car, and up the steps after that vision of vanishing coat tails rushed Henderson and De Viguers. Through that car, and the next, and still the next they sped, glaring excitedly on this side and that, only to bring up finally against the blank end of a baggage car. At the same

moment the engine gave a premonitory puff, and the two baffled pursuers, leaping to the ground, looked dazedly around for some clue to the pursued. But though he had in some way doubled on his tracks, the day was not wholly lost. For a few yards beyond the platform, and so out of range of the station master's sway, behold the valiant Uncle Ephraim, dragging from the open side door of the baggage car a wooden box and a haircloth trunk!

"Hit's mine," he gasped, as he sprawled to the ground with his treasures, precipitated by the impetus of the now rapidly moving train. "De trunk's what I kep' de offerin's in!" By the time that the indignant baggage master had reached the prostrate defender of his trust the train had vanished around a neighboring curve.

While De Viguers explained to the station men, and Uncle Ashur joyfully wept over his recovered treasures, Henderson went at the wooden box with ravenous curiosity, tearing it open by main strength and a jackknife. When the lid came off he gave one quick look and said, "I thought so."

"A magic lantern!" said De Viguers, peering in.

"A biograph," said Henderson. "Wonder where he stole that? Well, weren't we a choice collection of jackasses and dunderheads?"

"The station agent says," said De Viguers, "that he must have been the fake scientist who gave a lecture on astronomy in Merton Courthouse last month, and disappeared without paying for his board or for the use of the schoolhouse, — but how did he use that thing on the clock?"

"Had a series of pictures of a clock face, and kept 'em whirling," said Henderson briefly. "Simplest thing in the world. Here's the whole apparatus. The white clock face made a splendid background. I wonder why we never saw the light from the confounded thing?"

"That avenue of trees that goes down to the gate," said De Viguers musingly. "They screened it some, and then the moon was very brilliant all that time, and — well, he was dealing with a town of fools, you know."

"How," queried the same speaker during the far more leisurely drive back to Corinne, "could an elaborate swindle like that pay

him, with its thousand risks of exposure and its comparatively slight profits?"

"Oh, I don't pretend," answered the Northerner, "to explain an honest man's vagaries, let alone those of a scamp. And as it turned out, it didn't pay him; and no one has lost anything—for keeps," — with a gleam in his eye that needs no interpretation.

One odd thing happened shortly after this, —the town clock of Corinne stopped for good and all. De Viguers says, from age; Sprague says from folks a-tampering with and a-feeling of the machinery when there wasn't nothing wrong with it; but Unc' Ashur says, and is believed: —

"Hit's all t'rough that ar white debbil w'u'kkin' on it wid dat mesheen. Can' tell me all dat ar 'lectrificity c'u'd be p'inted at er clock and not hu't hit any. No, sah, Mas' Henderson!"

The Blumley Benefit.

BY GEORGE MADDEN MARTIN.

THE Blumley Benefit, however, was preceded by the Blumley misfortunes. As to the beginning of the latter, Owsley's Row were ignorant: they could testify only that from the very moment of moving into No. 20, the Blumleys appeared to be down on their luck.

Not that Blumley lacked energy, for during his brief residence in the Row he tried his hand as teamster, porter, substitute street-car driver, and bill poster, to lose the one job after the other through a varying combination of the misfortunes fatefully dogging his steps. Nor was Blumley to be held responsible when, just as he had secured steady employment on the bridge building across the Ohio, a pier went down, and he and a score of others with it.

A plain case for damages, of course, as the lawyer, seeking to constitute himself the Blumley's, assured them, and the Bridge Company, evidently of the same mind, hastened to compromise with him, $450 finally reaching the widow.

But after paying for the $95 funeral, an attention which, according to the Row, Blumley had justly earned, if one regarded the damages from his point of view, and after buying the family mourning and a set of red plush furniture, long the desire of hard-working little Mrs. Blumley's ambition, and after, also, paying for a gilt-framed crayon of Blumley, the $450 was somewhat reduced. And a hard winter following, there was barely enough remaining to bury Mrs. Blumley when the fever, consequent to defective sewerage in No. 20, carried her off the following summer.

But when approached with a suggestion of asylums and separation, — seemingly the only outlook for a family whose head was aged but fifteen, — the orphaned Blumleys were obdurate.

"We'll try it first together," said Letitia Leonora, the eldest,

trembling on the verge of changing to tears. "I'm doin' well enough, as it is, at the woolen mills; an' Bertha, she'll begin there, too. Tom, he's out now, huntin' a job; an' Lemuel, he'll keep on with sellin' papers, an' we'll move inter one room, an' try it,— first."

"An' Livy May?" inquired the Row.

"Can keep house," said Letitia Leonora, "she's plenty smart to, is Livy May."

And Livy May, aged nine, did, with a little help from the other inmates of No. 20; and in the pauses nursed a rag doll-baby, with the same conscientious attention to duty that made her pans the brightest and her bread the lightest in No. 20.

As for Letitia Leonora, she collected the family revenues and disbursed them again, with a premature judgment and an anxious reckoning in her eyes that would have done credit to any housewife in the Row.

And seeing this, and that Tom and Lemuel even resigned from the ranks of the Marlborough Juvenile Dramatic Company, — to the professional requirements of which local organization much of their time previously had been given,— and instead settled down to the steady grind, the Row ceased its forebodings and watched the Blumleys struggle successfully through the first months of orphanhood, with a magnanimous pleasure at being proven in the wrong.

But it shook its united heads when the leg of the Blumley cooking stove gave way, and the Blumleys' worldly goods, plush furniture, crayon and all, were burned up or ruined by water, to say nothing of the damage to Livy May, incurred in her efforts, as housekeeper, to save what she could of the family fortunes.

And then No. 20, drawing breath at the narrow escape of the rest of the house, agreed with the Row that the Blumleys, if only for the safety of the neighbors, must break up family life.

"Not if we can only just get enough together to begin over again," begged Letitia Leonora, the rims of her eyelids quite pink with crying, and her hands seeking each other convulsively; "a a bed, a stove, and a stew-pan, please, and we'll be no trouble to nobody. An' Livy May, when she comes out the horspital, she'll be more careful, though it wasn't rightly her fault, do you think, stove legs being likely to be weakly for anybody?" — which last

the Row could not gainsay. Only, it argued, even while offering temporary accommodations to the homeless Blumleys, — only where were even these humble furnishings to come from, "not to make mention of clothes an' beddin'."

At which Letitia Leonora, counting the contents of her old, worn purse again, faltered and wept.

It was following this unpleasant scene that the Marlborough Juvenile Dramatic Company, in response to the summons of its manager, gathered, the same evening, under the gas lamp of Owsley's Row. And here, rightly, the story of the Blumley Benefit begins.

The company having assembled, its manager, his arms folded across his ragged jacket, raised his eyes from a tragic study of the cobble-stoned thoroughfare, and gazed upon his colleagues from beneath a moody brow. "This 'ere Dramatic Comp'ny," he then informed them, "is er disgrace to the perfeshion. Tom an' Lem Blumley havin' been members from the start, too. The Blumleys er goin' to have er benefit, which they oughter er had long ago, an' that's the straight of it."

This proposition being received with applause, the Juveniles were following it up with a general discussion as to ways and means, when their manager's attention was seen to wander, and his eyes to fix themselves anxiously upon a figure advancing in the dusk. A figure, bucket and mop in hand, that tottered unsteadily along the opposite sidewalk, and went into No. 15.

"She," and it was to be noticed that the manager's stage voice and vernacular were dropped in his anxiety, "she mustn't get onto it, if I'm in it, yer know," and his glance, seeing the tottering figure safely in No. 15, came back to his companions.

The Juveniles, from their positions on curb, on inverted ash barrel, on the cobble stones themselves, nodded intelligently.

To the employees of the Marlborough Theater, the "sure enough" temple of melodrama, to which she was attached as scrubwoman, this tottering figure was known as the Sere and Yellow, in token of their wondering speculation over the number of times that the leaf had been turned when she was threatened with the loss of her position. By the younger population she was more familiarly hailed as "Ol' Miss January"; still more familiarly ac-

costed as "Whoa, January," on those occasions when having received too much spirituous encouragement, the old Adam in the venerable lady aroused and took possession. But by the members of the Marlborough Juveniles she was regarded with due awe as their manager's grandmother and lawful guardian, whose oft-repeated mandates to hold himself aloof from things theatrical her grandson disobeyed only at peril to his small person's comfort. Other relatives he had none, though a dim tradition of the neighborhood connected him through a long-dead mother with the profession which his grandmother held in such disfavor.

And yet what could the old lady expect, with the rear entrance to the Marlborough Theater directly across from Owsley's Row? Not a boy in breeches about that neighborhood but was more at home in the Marlborough's peanut gallery than at his own fireside. Not a play seen twice on the Marlborough's boards but could, between memory and improvisation, be reproduced by the Juveniles, with a mimetic ability quite realistic. Keep himself aloof from things theatrical, indeed, — Lawrence Barrett, Jr., the star actor of the Juveniles!

Under the circumstances, the Marlborough Juveniles could only swear secrecy concerning their manager's connection with the affair, and go on making practical their plans for a Blumley Benefit.

For a theater, the modest scope of the Juveniles would not have risen above some member's family apartment, except for Adolph Hirsche, the proprietor of the Exchange, adjoining the rear entrance of the Marlborough Theater. To that gentleman the proposed benefit offered an opportunity to at last eclipse the counter attractions of the rival exchange, the Bijou, whose Christmas tree, given in the holidays just past, had not merely left the mild celebrations of the Mission and the Free Kindergarten almost unattended, but had even won away some of Mr. Hirsche's most paying customers.

Thus it came about that when the Juveniles went into active rehearsing the benefit was advertised to take place at the Marlborough Exchange.

Meanwhile "Ol' Mis' January," with bucket and mop, sometimes maudlin, always morose, came and went at the theater, nor paused, as is the custom in Owsley's Row, to pass the time of day

with her neighbors, or to gossip on the doorsteps, and so failed to hear of that near approaching event in local dramatic circles.

And in one of the intervals of her comings and goings, Lawrence Barrett January chose his opportunity, and presented himself at the office of the manager of the Marlborough Theater. And Lawrence being small and slight, except as to his eyes, it was to be wondered why the manager should have started so when he turned and saw the little figure at his desk, ragged hat in hand.

But Lawrence Barrett, Jr., had not, for good half his years, steeped himself in theatrical phrase and lore to be at a loss now. "The manager, I believe?" said he, and the advance agent for *The Greatest Show On Earth* could not have said it more suavely.

"The same," said the manager, and leaned back in his chair, and looked at the small boy as if trying to place him.

"And I," said Lawrence, with dignity and impressiveness, "am the manager of the Marlborough Juv'nile Dramatic Comp'ny."

The gentleman coughed and bowed, and one would have said, looked amused, but for that absent and puzzled vagueness in his eyes.

"An' I called," continued the visitor cheerfully, "in the in't'rest of the Blumley Benefit to be give by my comp'ny."

Again the manager bowed, and coughed, and waved an approaching *attaché* to refrain from interruption.

Lawrence Barrett, Jr., came close to the desk, and his hands clasped the top of its railing. "They're orphans, yer know, the Blumleys," he explained, "an' their stove let down an' burned 'em out. Everybody is a helpin' get the benefit up. Mr. Hirsche is goin' to have it at his Exchange, an' his wife, she's fixin' us up, but we need some make-ups she don' no' how to do, er female wig in pertic'lar," and Lawrence Barrett's eyes sought the manager's persuasively.

Perhaps he did not find there what he sought, for, shifting on his feet, he added, "My gran'mer," hastily, "my gran'mer, ol' Mis' January, she's got er blonde wig in er trunk, we can use if you don't happen to have more'n one handy."

A flush was spreading up and over the manager's dark face. "Your name?" said he.

The visitor was obviously flattered, "Allie January, by rights, but I'm better known to the perfeshion as Lawrence Barrett January, you see."

The manager saw, and could also see what Lawrence, his back to the open door, could not, — an old woman, blear-eyed and tottery, coming up the hall, bucket and mop in hand, her gray hair straggling from beneath a rakish old bonnet fallen to one side. And for reasons of his own, entirely apart from his visitor's personal safety, the manager of the Marlborough arose from his revolving chair and kicked the door to.

"Does she — does your grandmother know that you came here for this?" he asked, and his black brows met suddenly above his handsome and aquiline nose, as he stood over the small boy.

But at the mention, Lawrence Barrett, Jr., glanced around apprehensively, and took a step nearer the other. "She says," he confided, "she's al'ays sayin' she'll whale the skin clean ofen me if she ever ketches me over here."

"Exactly," said the manager, and at the something in his voice, Lawrence found himself involuntarily backing toward the door; "but seeing that the Blumleys are orphans, we'll agree to compromise on the female wig and not inform her of this visit, for once. You quite understand me? *For this once*," and Lawrence Barrett, Jr., quite jumped at the emphasis, and at the unpleasant way the gentleman's lip lifted at the corner and showed his white and even teeth.

"An' he lent us this here one," explained the youthful manager on his return to his company, "but in my gran'mer's trunk is another, er blonde one, as 'll do fer me, an' some togs along with it, white slippers if I can wear 'em, an' all. I knows they're there, because sometimes she gets 'em out an' looks at 'em, and cries, an' one time she showed 'em ter me, when — when —" but Lawrence Barrett, Jr., paused, too loyal to state exactly when and under what circumstances his grandparent had turned thus confidential.

Meantime, elaborate preparations were going forward at the Exchange for the staging of the Juveniles' production. Industriously and ingeniously did Mrs. Adolph Hirsche ply her needle, converting cambric and silesia into results admirably calculated to

win back Owsley's Row's fickle favor. And when the day arrived, certain of the very fixtures of the place were torn from their foundations to make room for stage and audience; while at seven o'clock a passing street band was stationed in front of the Exchange, to crash alluring and welcoming strains to the gathering populace, quite after the manner of the Marlborough Theater itself.

And Owsley's Row, in a body, attended, family as well as local pride being largely involved, while even Pyncheon Street, and Todd, and Kirk, and Gannon were largely represented.

Altogether, the seating capacity of the place was so severely taxed that there was considerable trouble in finding places for the Blumleys themselves, arriving late, because of having to fetch Livy May, still in plasters and bandages, from the hospital, for the occasion.

"*The Pirate's Bride*," announced the program chalked upon the blackboard, which, in ordinary, stated the especial edible that day served on the free-lunch counter.

"*The Pirate's Bride*, followed by a Program of Variety Features."

And *the Pirate* (Mr. Shakespeare Hendricks, according to the blackboard, but known outside professional circles as Fisty Henricks) raved and swore, and his victims fell in gory heaps. And *the Bride* (set apart for female parts by his high falsetto), having from the start declared her determination to die, by Heaven-n-n! and her own hand, rather than enter into the matrimonial relations insisted upon by her piratical wooer, swooned frequently, not to say perpetually. While *the Hero* (Footlight Tim, or Mr. Timothy Mulvaney) won storms of applause by reason of his highly morals sentiments, and finally brought matters to a finis, by transfixing *the Pirate* upon that gentleman's own bloody weapon, and then appropriating *the Bride*, who again took the occasion to retire into a swoon, immediately upon confessing her sentiments as regarded *the Hero*, to be identical with those of the audience.

And when the curtain fell, and the applause subsided, and the audience drew breath and began to gaze around, it was with thrills of pride, indeed, that Owsley's Row noted the manager of the Marlborough Theater among the spectators, leaning against the bar, and smiling at the bartender's remarks.

But their attention was recalled to the stage, or Owsley's Row might have wondered why, as the curtain rose again on the "Variety Features," the manager of The Marlborough should turn so ghastly pale, and why the hand resting on the bar should grasp its beveled edge until the knuckles grew white.

Why, indeed, they might have wondered, as they applauded the small figure upon the stage,—a picture, from the tilting toe of the little white slipper so saucily thrust forward on its heel from beneath the white skirts, to the big hat caught together to frame the roguish face smiling beneath the curly wig. Why, indeed, seeing that it was only little Allie January, making big eyes over his shoulder as he tripped about, singing an old song raked up for the occasion from the traditions of the neighborhood, the hit of the Marlborough Theater in by-gone days.

Nor did the audience, its eyes upon the stage, see the street door open, and ol' Mis' January, poor Sere and Yellow, come in.

Drunk? No; though her gaze, arrested by that flitting figure, was bleared and wild. Not though her gray hair streamed, and her old hands went out to ward the apparition off. Not drunk, though the white-lipped manager turning, found her in his path, with accusing eyes meeting his, and an outstretched, shaking finger pointing toward the stage. And when suddenly she turned and tottered to the door, as if fleeing the vision, her arms stretched, open-palmed, above her head, he followed into the dark and drizzling night, and watched her stumble across the cobble stones, then slowly crossed after, and more slowly followed, into No. 15, Owsley's Row.

When, the benefit brought to a gratifying close, Lawrence Barrett, Jr., returned to his home near midnight, it was with apprehension and much caution that he made his way into the January apartment. The hour of reckoning had come, and with the blonde wig and outfit in the bundle under his arm, Lawrence Barrett, Jr., feared it.

But the bundle fell, and he stood and gazed bewildered, as, closing the door, he saw his grandmother, her disheveled old head bowed into her hands, not maudlin, nor yet in drunken stupor, but weeping.

. . . . . .

As for the Blumley Benefit, whether considered from a financial, artistic, or social standpoint, or as a drawing card for Mr. Adolph Hirsche's Exchange, it was what a theatrical agent would call an emphatic and triumphant success. And, on the very next day, the Marlborough Juveniles proudly counted their earnings into Letitia Leonora's worn purse, nor appeared to notice the suspicious red deepening about her eyelids, or the splashing of one great tear upon the thin hand.

But to the Juveniles the loss of their manager came as a staggering blow, when, following the Blumley Benefit, he disappeared out of the life of Owsley's Row as completely as if No. 15 had never known him.

His grandmother remained, however, and still, with bucket and mop, totters to and from the Marlborough Theater; only, varying the old program, at rare intervals she is seen to enter the manager's office and stand by his desk and listen, with a wistful questioning upon her face, to words accorded her grudgingly, and with averted face.

And on one of these occasions the carpenter, raising his head as the Sere and Yellow tottered by, is reported to have heard her muttering, "Growin' fast, an' happy, an' learnin' — aye, an' learnin', — learnin' to forget."

But the Blumleys continue living in Owsley's Row to this day, self-respecting, self-sustaining, taking their place in the social life with proper pride, even to the replacing of the plush furniture.

Saint Elizabeth.

BY ANNA B. PATTEN.

IT was a steady downpour of rain, such as taxed the resources even of our merry house party, that sent me to seek amusement in the portrait gallery at Redfern Hall. From the time of my arrival, a week before, I had loved to stroll there daily, speculating over the probable history of those knights in armor and beruffled dames of the past. My special favorite, however, was the portrait of a lovely young girl kneeling before her *prie dieu*, telling her rosary. She was not strictly beautiful, but her face wore such a sweetly pensive expression, with so rapt and tender a look in the eyes, that she seemed to lack only the halo to become a saint.

It was before this picture that I stood, absorbed in admiration, when the housekeeper passed through, on her way to her quarters. I took the opportunity of gratifying my curiosity.

"That picture? Oh, that is Saint Elizabeth," she announced, in reply to my inquiry. "Poor thing!" brushing her apron across her eyes, "it's a sad story — the tragedy of the house, you know."

I did not know, but was so anxious to learn that Mrs. Fairbanks was finally prevailed upon to return with her sewing and relate the history of my favorite portrait. "And a long story it is," she preluded, as we settled ourselves in a cozy alcove where we could be free from interruptions, yet within sight of Saint Elizabeth at her devotions. "A long story, though her life was short enough, poor dear! There's very few people as knows of it but me. My mother was housekeeper at the time, and she told me all the facts of the case. It was kept pretty quiet while Master Gilbert was alive. He was powerful proud, and he thought it a blot on the scutcheon — that's what he called it. He would have put it out of sight — the picture, I mean — only it has such a

saint look that I believe he was superstitious about meddling with it. When he died the property went to a distant relative — the present master. He never takes any interest in such things — I doubt if he knows there ever was such a person; so I don't see anything to hinder me telling you the particulars."

After a brief silence, during which Mrs. Fairbanks dropped her work and gazed pensively at the Madonna-like face, as if questioning whether she should divulge its hallowed history, she continued: —

"It was in Master's Rupert's time. He was a queer piece, I should judge, from what mother said,—a sort of mixture. His mother was a Spaniard, and he got his quick temper from that side of the house, but he was cold and self-contained on the surface, like all the Redferns; so, you see, when he did give way to his anger, it was something fearful. Mother said that at such times everybody got out of the way who could possibly do so. Still he was flattered and made much of, for he was rich and titled, and the young ladies they smiled on him, and their mammas entertained him, but it was all of no use. He cared nothing for any of them. He just buried himself in the library with his books, or up in the studio with his pictures, for he was a fine artist and could have made a fortune with his brush if he had a minded to, which only goes to prove that the Bible tells the truth when it says, 'To him that hath shall be given.'" Mrs. Fairbanks paused to take breath after this bit of scriptural philosophy.

"So you see, after awhile the gentry folks they sort of gave him up. They all came to the conclusion that there never would be a mistress at the Hall, but, bless me, they made a mistake! One summer Master Rupert flew off on a sketching trip — he was always doing that way, starting off without a moment's notice, and expecting his things to be all packed up and ready. Well, he met her by accident, in some out-of-the-way place in the mountains, and it was all up with him. He made up his mind to marry her on the spot. Every one wondered afterward at his choice. To be sure she had a lovely face, but then she was only a slim bit of a girl, with shy, shrinking ways; not at all the grand lady you'd think he'd have picked out for the mistress of this great house.

"As for the girl, poor little thing, living there in the wilds, she

had nothing to say in the matter except her "yes" at the altar. It was all fixed up between Sir Rupert and her mother; she simply obeyed her mother now, as she had done every hour of her life. It probably never occurred to her that she could do anything else.

"Ah, but it was a gala day, they say, when the master brought his wife home! The bells were rung, bonfires were built, and flower-girls strewed blossoms in their path. She seemed awed by all the splendor, and a little frightened at being the center of so much attention. She shrank closer to her husband and glanced up at him timidly, but, instead of cheering her by a sweet word of encouragement, he just spoke stern like to her, as if to remind her of her duty. Oh, yes, he was fond of her; you could see that by the way his eyes followed her from place to place, but, like all the Redferns, he didn't believe in showing it. No matter how much you might lay yourself out to please them, you never got any thanks, though if the work was done poorly you were sure to hear of it.

"Well, there were gay goings-on for a time. The house was full of guests, and my lady was made much of, and some of her timidity was beginning to wear away; but now it was the master's turn to grow uneasy. It almost seemed as if he was jealous of every look and smile she gave another. You see he knew he hadn't touched her heart, and he feared to have it awakened. All at once he stopped inviting friends to the Hall; he shut her up like a bird in a gilded cage, and gloated over her all to himself, in his cruel, selfish way. He loved to dress her up in jewels and fine clothes and pose her for different pictures — that is one of them that you admire so much. He had the walls of his studio hung with all sorts of studies of her, and he never cared to sit anywhere else.

"Then he took up his books again, and she must always be near by, curled up like a mouse in one of the lounging-chairs, ready to do his bidding. She yielded to him, as she had yielded to her mother, without a word of complaint. Only once she rebelled; that was when he scoffed at her devotion to her religion. Then she turned on him with a look in her eyes that told him he had gone too far. Perhaps he came to the conclusion that religion was not the worst rival a man could have; that, on the contrary,

it was more than likely to keep a woman out of mischief. Anyway, it was plain enough to see, my mother said, that the poor, starved little creature must have some outlet for her pent-up affection, so she poured out her soul in devotion at the sacred shrine of the Virgin Mary. Perhaps she found there the mother love she had never known.

"Well, the master let her practise her whim undisturbed, so long as it did not interfere with his pleasure. The unused chapel was opened, and she spent hours at her *aves* and *paters*, and many a day in penitential fasting. A priest came over from the adjoining diocese to hear her confession, though what misdemeanors such a saint from heaven could have to lay bare the Lord alone knew. That was how she happened to get the name of Saint Elizabeth — not in any trifling sense, mind you — there wasn't one of the servants, from the butler to the scullery maid, but would have laid down for her to walk over them.

"Things went on in this same dull, prosy way until about Christmas time. With the coming of the cold winter season, Father Chapelle, who was getting along in years, found the journey too much to undertake, with all his parish duties, and sent one of the priests in his place. Mother said that young priest was a picture, with a voice to melt the heart of the most hardened sinner. He came into that gloomy house like a burst of sunshine, and not one of them all but felt better for his coming. As for Lady Elizabeth, she got so she leaned on him for comfort and advice at all times; he was her tower of defense in all her doubts and perplexities.

"It was some light gossip in the village that first started the rumor flying. How any one could have connected a thought of evil with such as they God alone knows, but there are some weak bodies as will soil their lips with any idle tale, and ill news travels fast. The only fear was that it might get to the master's ears, and he *that* unreasonable. He had taken no notice of the change, or, if he did, one priest was the same as another to him; but no one could help seeing the improvement in my lady. She had lost that listless look, and her whole manner was brighter and more hopeful. She tried now, in her timid, childish way, to minister to his happiness, using a thousand little feminine devices to

arouse his attention. She did not make much progress, for once let a man get settled in a groove of selfishness and it is hard to root him out of it; but he used to watch her in a puzzled way, as if trying to find an explanation for the change.

"One day the crash came! Late in the afternoon the master dashed into the courtyard at a furious pace, his horse's sides flecked with foam. He threw the reins to the groom, who came hurriedly out to answer the summons.

"'Send Hawkins to me!' was his order, as he strode into the house. Hawkins lost no time in following, you may be sure. He found his master pacing up and down the room with that feverish glare in his eyes that boded no good to the object of his wrath.

"'Where is your mistress? Send her to me!' he thundered.

"'She is in the chapel, my lord. Her orders were that she was not to be disturbed. Father Dominic comes directly.'

"It would not do, miss, for me to repeat the master's reply," interpolated Mrs. Fairbanks, with a pious droop of her eyelids. "At any rate, it was something terrible, and Hawkins shook in his shoes while it went on; but in the midst of it the master stopped short as if struck with a sudden thought. 'Ah, I have it, just the thing!' he shouted, and he rushed out into the hall toward the chapel, Hawkins following, for he feared for his mistress' safety. What was his horror to see his master walk into the sacristy, take down Father Dominic's robe, and proceed to fling it on over his shoulders, drawing the cowl carefully over his face! Hawkins stood like a log. He knew now what Master Rupert was about to do, before he saw him glide softly into the confessional where my lady knelt, waiting to open her innermost thoughts to his jealous scrutiny."

"But what a terrible position for Hawkins, Mrs. Fairbanks! What did he do?"

"Terrible doesn't begin to express it! My mother used to say that Hawkins was never the same man from that day. You see, he was in a tight place; he dared not reveal himself to his master in his present state of excitement, nor could he betray the scandal to any other member of the household. All he could do was to pace up and down the anteroom, wondering what was going on

in that secret place behind the drawn curtains. Suddenly he heard the door open softly and, looking up, he saw Father Dominic himself walk into the sacristy, glance in astonishment at the empty hook, and then walk swiftly toward the confessional.

"It was a minute before Hawkins could pull himself together. He had not once thought of this probable outcome of the tragedy. With terror of the coming revelation, he sprang forward to intercept him, but he was too late. Father Dominic lifted the curtain, and my lady, glancing up, startled by the interruption, saw his face. She sprang to her feet, staring dazedly from one quiet figure to the other. She drew her hand across her forehead in a bewildered way, then suddenly darted forward and tore the cowl from the other's face. When she saw what it revealed she gave a shriek of horror, and sank down at his feet!"

"Not dead!" I exclaimed, quite overcome by this startling development.

"Yes, stone dead! She never breathed again. It was her heart, the doctor said, and true enough, hadn't she had enough to break a heart of granite?"

"Oh, please go on, Mrs. Fairbanks. What happened next?"

The housekeeper shook her head mournfully.

"There isn't much more to tell. Hawkins said as how he held his breath as the two men faced each other, both so white and stern. His master's eyes had lost their wild glare, they had a look of agony as they met those of the priest, and his hands had been clenched so fiercely that they had left the marks of the nails in his palms. He caught the priest fiercely by the arm. 'Is it true,' he whispered hoarsely, 'what she confessed here at my feet, that she was trying to make me care for her — I that worshiped her — night and morning she prayed for this — it was the hope of her life?' The priest bowed his head solemnly.

"'Too true, dear saint! Sometimes she was almost disheartened by your coldness toward her, but she never quite despaired.'

"The master fell back as if he had been struck a blow.

"'My God! and I had to sit silent, for fear of revealing myself, and now it is too late! Strike me, priest, where I stand, a blasphemous hound. Do you hear? You will not? Your sacred calling forbids it, eh? But it would not have spared you from

my hand. I came here to kill you, and now I have slain her, the innocent lamb! A life for a life, your Bible says,'— and before the priest could prevent him, he drew a pistol from his pocket and shot himself through the heart."

In the silence that followed the somber close of the housekeeper's story, I turned once more to the portrait of Saint Elizabeth, wondering whether she had at last found compensation for her short life's tragedy. A pale sunbeam that broke through the clouds just then touched the bowed girlish head as with the halo omitted by the painter; that was my question's only answer.

The Man Who Ran Europe.

BY FRANK L. POLLOCK.

HE man's name was Ranon, and he was Spanish by birth, American by education, and, at the time of this narrative, anarchistic and destructive by inclination. He had been in the Spanish diplomatic service since he was eighteen, at Washington, New Orleans, Liverpool, Genoa, and finally in the government offices at Manilla in the Philippines. During these fifteen years, besides becoming an accomplished linguist, he had picked up a good deal in the way of experience and among other things he had learned practically almost all the different secret codes or ciphers in which the foreign consuls telegraph important information to their respective governments.

But as the years slipped on, and he found himself occupying much the same sort of minor under-paid post as at the beginning, it did not seem to him that the service was all it should be. Fifty times he saw an inexperienced stripling shoved in over his head, because, forsooth, the stripling's uncle or brother-in-law controlled votes, or stocks, or newspapers, or mobs. And all the while he missed promotion, and was refused leave, and toiled along on eleven hundred dollars a year, because he had no stockholding, mob-wielding relative who must be placated.

Thus Ranon became cynical, destructive, and pessimistic. He fermented with indignation against everything, including diplomatic service in general, and the Spanish service in particular. He considered that the political world was going to the — ahem ! — to the dogs. International diplomacy was a hollow and whitewashed farce. He would have liked to see a general European war, in which Spain should be soundly thrashed. He was American by education, as I said, and he never had much affection for his native land ; rather less just at present. Besides, he had seen too much of government from the inside to have any patriotism left.

"If I were only a king," he reflected one evening over his cigaritto, and then pulled himself up by the discovery that nothing less than the dictatorship of all Europe would satisfy his expansive desires. He felt that he would like to set half Europe by the ears, while he looked omnipotently on, as he might at the bull ring. Then, when this genial sport palled, he would execute a few obnoxious individuals, alter a few boundaries, do away with the diplomatic service, and abandon himself to the delights of ruling.

Now, if Ranon had been a Spaniard alone, he might have evolved this fantastic idea, but it would never have been more than a dream. Being half American, and therefore practical, his brain automatically set itself, half humorously, to seek a solid road to this ideal.

For several months the notion possessed his mind, and he entertained it with just a shade of seriousness. He read with interest of filibusters, of dynamiters, and of *coups d'état*. He thought of joining himself to the rebels inland, who would welcome him for his special knowledge; he read European politics with avidity, and studied international law with ardor. But it was more than half in jest, till his great idea came upon him one evening like a galvanic shock.

In the sudden consciousness, he got up, threw away his cheroot, and paced the bamboo verandah with swelling breast. The lights of Manilla twinkled through the shaded streets; the ship lanterns glowed from the harbor; the China Seas were outside, and beyond lay India, Russia, Austria, France, Germany, Spain, and Ranon felt that these lay, as it were, in the hollow of his hand,—and by the simplest means.

He did not delay about executing his design once he had conceived it, and the thought that his own execution might follow did not deter him in the least. He handed in his resignation at the offices in the city, and contemplated his politely surprised chief with an air of authority that caused that official more wonder than ever. Then to Hong-Kong he went on the bi-monthly steamer, and returned with a lot of electrical apparatus, and a "mirror galvanometer" telegraph instrument, constructed for submarine cabling.

Now it is the case that only one electric wire connects the Philippines with civilization, and that is laid from Manilla to Hong-Kong. It enters the sea at the northwestern corner of the city, in a somewhat secluded quarter, and before it connects with the land wire is buried in the sand of the beach, to protect it from injury. In this secluded quarter Ranon hired a house, and every night he went down to the beach, carrying a spade and other tools. In a few days, if any one had investigated the matter, he would have found the cable cut in two, and the ends separated by a piece of rubber,—a thin film, but as good as a mile. To each of the severed ends was attached a copper wire, and, if the explorer had traced up these wires, he would have found them leading, mostly by underground routes, in the direction of Ranon's house.

There was a good deal of difficulty at first in arranging the connections, and in getting the hang of the peculiar cable instruments, for Ranon was used only to land telegraphy. But at last all seemed right, and early one morning he wired to the Foreign Office at Madrid, using the Spanish cipher, as follows: —

Three German war-ships entered Manilla Harbor at 6 A. M. Their commodore informs me that he intends landing marines to protect German subjects in case of the insurgents attacking the city. There is no possibility of the insurgents attacking the city. Our fleet is scattered along the coast on blockade duty. Wire instructions.

To this bit of fiction he signed the name of the Spanish governor. About two hours later he telegraphed again: —

Armed soldiers and sailors have been landed in spite of my remonstrances. Am unable to use force. Suspect that the Germans are secretly in league with the rebels, who are now said to be massing near the city.

In a few minutes more, using the German official cipher, he sent this message to Berlin: —

Six German subjects have been massacred without provocation by the Spanish soldiery. Have demanded an indemnity. Wire instructions.

To this he signed the name of the German consul at Manilla. Then, having despatched his bombshells, he sat back and waited. It is a matter of almost thirty hours to telegraph between Manilla and Madrid.

An unforeseen embarrassment began to develop itself about this time. As the day advanced, numbers of messages began to come in, both from the continent for Manilla, and from Manilla for all parts of the world. Every one of these Ranon was obliged to take off and read before forwarding it, lest it should contain information whose transmission might shatter his careful framework of duplicity. All these, however, happened to be short and unimportant private despatches, which he transmitted at once, toiling and sweating to keep pace with the flashing mirror of the instrument. It was hard and trying work, but in an hour or two the press slackened, and he was enabled to rest.

But meanwhile there was dismay in two ministries of Europe, hurry and worry, consternation and telegraphing to ambassadors. Spain informed her representative at Berlin of the state of affairs, but warned him on no account to speak or act without further instructions. Telegrams were sent from Madrid to inform the Philippine governor that he must endeavor to have the foreign war-ships withdrawn, peaceably if possible; if not, by the threat of force. From Berlin, the German consul was informed that he must see to it that there were no more murders. He was empowered to threaten force, if necessary. And the diplomats of both countries made it the chief business of their lives that no inkling of the complication should leak out of the council chamber.

The man chuckled diabolically as he read the replies, and at once replied to Spain that the war-ships refused to withdraw, and that the German soldiers were behaving insolently in the town. To Berlin he said that the Spanish governor refused an indemnity, that he had treated his representations with insolence, and that there was a popular agitation against the Germans, whose lives were no longer safe. He suggested that war-ships be sent.

When these telegrams were severally received, both governments decided that it was time to take steps. The Spanish Legate at Berlin was instructed to bring the case before the German ministry. This he did, and was met with a square repudiation of the whole affair. No German war vessels had been sent to Philippine waters. Meanwhile the German ambassador at Madrid had complained of the massacres to the Spanish foreign Secretary, and had been received with a denial of any knowledge

of the affair. Then both nations disbelieved each other, ordered men-of-war to be held in readiness, redoubled their precautions for secrecy, and telegraphed to the East for further detail.

Ranon had a bell arranged to ring when a message came in, and its jingle continually awoke him in the dead of night. He was tired, for he had been kept awake, more or less, for several nights by the wire. The perplexities of office began to weigh, and he reflected that he had never really known before how hard kings and prime ministers had to work. He supplied the required details, however, at considerable length. He told Spain that the German officers planned to establish a protectorate over the island, as a preliminary, no doubt, to making it over to the rebels. He told Berlin that several Germans had been dragged from their houses and maltreated, and that the German flag had been publicly insulted. He added that the governor refused to investigate these atrocities.

Being informed of this, the Spanish ambassador at Berlin made further complaints, only to be received with a blank face. Thereupon the diplomat nearly lost his temper, accused the Teutonic ministry of playing a double game, demanded his passports, and went to pack his trunks. Germany at once began to sound the Triple Alliance, to ascertain just what practical support she would receive in case of war, and a great many secret messages passed between Berlin, Vienna, and Rome.

Spain received the remonstrances of the German ambassador with equal doubt and suspicion. She had secret information of the German machinations in Central Europe, and she at once began to work in the direction of an alliance with France. Considerable concessions were given to several enormous French syndicates, and messages of diplomatic friendship began to be exchanged between the two countries. Without delay she commanded that four first-class cruisers be at once started for the East, and at the same time wired to Manilla to have the whole Philippine fleet concentrated, and to resist further German interference, if necessary, by force of arms.

The man at the center of all this coil learned of it by the messages pouring in from every capital of Europe for their respective agents. He worked breathlessly in the hot, darkened room till the flickering indicator made his brain reel and swim, and he closed

his eyes for a moment, only to be jerked back to the demands of his new kingdom by the tinkling of the electric bell. But all his weariness could not dull his consciousness to the fact that it was by his solitary machinations that Europe was being divided into two camps, and that the telegraph key beneath his finger was the lever that held half of civilization in a wavering balance.

From the hurrying sequence of telegrams that followed each other with feverish rapidity he learned that the Triple Alliance held; that war fleets were being rapidly overhauled all through the Mediterranean and the North Sea; that German battle-ships were on their way to Manilla; that the neutrality of Russia was doubtful; of England and the United States, almost certain; that Alsace and Lorraine were being stirred up; that the Spanish-French cordiality was increasing; that Metz was being heavily garrisoned, and that every nation in Europe had its finger on the trigger, while the respective populaces were still in delightful and wholesome ignorance of the fact.

All this time the inhabitants of Manilla had reposed in equal unconsciousness of the international thunders muttering about their heads. Private messages had passed over the cable without interruption, and whenever Ranon had found it necessary to suppress a despatch he always returned a fabricated reply, after a suitable time. Thus no suspicion was aroused. It takes time for a war fleet to steam to Manilla, even from the nearest Spanish or German stations, and during all this interval Ranon was bombarded without respite with telegrams from Europe. He had fancied that he knew European politics indifferent well, but every hour he was confronted with some revelation that made his hair stand. Indeed, even had the jingling of the electric bell been silenced, curiosity concerning these international intrigues would have been enough to banish sleep. There were also private despatches without number, about beef or sugar or tobacco, and press telegrams, and all these had to be supervised, while the bell was jingling and the galvanometer flashing, and the two war fleets plowing nearer and nearer the city, and the gun factories all over the world working night and day, and the whole grim farce tragedy momentarily drawing to a head.

For a hundred hours Ranon had not slept, washed, or eaten any-

thing but snatched mouthfuls, and the strain was terrific. Haggard, unshaven, and blear-eyed, he bent over the diabolical instruments and read into the deepest depths of political darkness, and supplied such answers as seemed suitable. Had he been made of ordinary stuff, he would have abdicated his uneasy throne; but he stuck to it and sent out more details, shocking ones with plenty of sensation.

On the morning of the sixth sleepless night Ranon could distinctly feel all the tangled State secrets clicking and revolving like little cog-wheels in his head. A big drink of hot, strong coffee quieted them for awhile, but at every jingle of the electric bell they would start awhirling again with a jump.

This was not to be endured. He could scarcely see the indicator, but he worked on till the clash and rattle in his skull drowned the noise of the key, and showed him that for such a king as he was there was neither rest, nor sleep, nor peace. He got up, stood irresolutely for a moment, and then took a heavy hammer and crashed it down into the bunch of gleaming and oscillating instruments upon the table; and the little cog-wheels stopped.

It was steamer day. He took the scraps of flattened brass and copper and flung them into the sea, then tore up the wires for a hundred yards from the house, and took passage for Yokohama. He slept almost all the way, and in Japan he disappeared in the maze of steamer lines that cut up the whole Pacific.

The Eastern world was a good deal surprised to find its communication with Manilla suddenly cut, and a corps of electricians was set to examine the cable. There was more surprise when the rubber-jointed break was discovered, and most of all when a few telegrams had been exchanged with Western Europe. The governor and the whole body of foreign consuls worked day and night for a week, and when the Spanish cruisers and the German battle-ships arrived, sea worn and menacing, the officers were invited to a council and afterwards to a ball, while the sailors fraternized over cheroots and saki. So the danger was averted.

The makers of newspapers never got hold of it, and the makers of Blue Books naturally avoided the subject, so that this is the first and only account of this remarkable episode,— how one anarchist made himself king, and such a king as never was! How do I know? Well, I'm the man who ran Europe.

The Abalone Twins.

BY PHILIP VERRILL MIGHELS.

THE wind from the hills was softly spreading on the air; the sun was smiling in its radiance from out a cloudless sky, and the broad Pacific swelled, and heaved, and flashed like an undulating cloth of diamond.

Years of beating on the Californian coast had robbed the rocky cliff of monster boulder hostages, that lay below in groups, some of them jagged, some all rounded and trimmed with the plush of moss and weed, yet the cliff stood proudly up and offered to the sea another scornful cheek to smite. A space to the south of the beach, less abrupt, and the boulders met, and the rock, as if to escape the waters, was deeply buried in the sand.

From a squatty little house, that stood to its knees in the grass, a man emerged, a long and bony Chinese, booted for wading, a basket on his back, and made his way to the sea by a trail through the rocks. In his hand he held a spear-like tool, armed on the end with a rusted iron chisel. He sang at a weird composition, for lately he had finished a small brass pipe of opium-tainted tobacco, while his meal of rice and seaweed gave to his system a circulating comfort.

Where a long and slippery reef of rocks projected like teeth above the ebbing tide, he shambled down, and prodding here and there with the spear, went slowly zigzagging outward. Now and again he stopped to lift or to pry a smaller rock from its nest of weed and barnacles, keenly gazing in the yawning maw thus created, in search of the gray and rough-backed abalones.

The house in the grass was a tumbled-up structure, suggesting a much-pelted target, for its roof was flat, and rocks were a-top to keep the boards from scudding away in the breezes that frequently blew. Its color was greenish and grayish, with the moss and the

painting of weather. It stood on a hillock, and between its "yard," and the rocks, and the beach of the sea, a winding road was curved around from the near-by woods.

Presently out of these woods appeared a man, who slowly and somewhat furtively advanced. His face was florid, jaws a-bristle with a stiff, black stubble of beard, eyes aluminum gray and restless. The red flannel shirt, faded trousers, shapeless hat, and wrinkled boots, that made his dress, were heavy with dust.

His gaze went rapidly from sea to house. In front of the latter, near the grass-grown road, a stand, constructed of the roughest of lumber, was fairly ablaze and glinting, in iridescent hues, with two or three dozen remarkably beautiful shells. They were polished abalones, radiant within with greens and purples, and the subtlest shades of highly tinted mother-of-pearl, red as ruby and garnet without, and mottled with grays that were warm, glossy, and brilliant as opal.

Leaning in diffidence against the stand, his plump little hand on a basket, his round face very coyly and wistfully inclined toward his feet, while his brown and wondering eyes looked shyly up at the staring man, was a very diminutive China boy, dressed in a blouse and thin, yellow trousers that hung in folds to the top of his small, stiff shoes. His cheeks were as rosy as a tinted russet apple, his hands were brown as bronze. The sun and the salt-laden breezes of the roaring Pacific had colored him boldly with master touches of health, and life, and beauty. On his head was a monster hat, a basin-shaped affair, wrought of bamboo strips, the crown no larger than a cup for tea, and jutted up like a small volcanic peak.

They stood there wondering, the dusty man from the mountains and the short little chap of the shore.

"Hullo, kid," said the man, "what's the matter of yeh?"

"You likee buy abalonee?" piped the shrill voice of the tender of the stand, who was growing unassured; "velly plitty abalonee."

"Putty, hey? Aberlonees, hey?" replied the stranger. "No, I don't."

"You mamma velly muchee likee," piped the child, in echo of what he had learned, "velly plitty."

"Yeh don't tell," rejoined the man. Then he stood there

silently and shifted his weight from leg to leg, and thought and gazed so long that the China lad, embarrassed, sank slowly down, till it seemed as if he intended to crawl at the last beneath his hat. As it was, he sat in an odd little heap on the ground.

From a shed or low addition at the rear of the Chinaman's hut there started now a reddish horse, a thin and unambitious creature, that slowly trod about a circular path and turned a machine, to a pole or lever of which he was loosely secured. Sounds of a grumbling and then of a grinding, and grating, and gritting issued harshly on the air.

The stranger sauntered around. The horse, in walking tediously about, was turning wheels, that constantly complained, while sitting on the lever, a long, crooked stick in his hand, was apparently the same identical China lad who a moment before had been in front attending the stand. The same red cheeks, the same brown eyes, the round little face and the hands of bronze — everything was reproduced with an accuracy incredible. Round and round on the lever rode the tiny fellow, slashing mechanically now and again at the horse with his stick, but keeping his gaze, with astounding turnings of his much-behatted head, on the visiting man.

"Likee buy abalonee?" he shrilly piped from his lever, like a parrot. "Velly plitty, takee home for mamma!"

"Yeu go tuh heck," the visitor answered. "I tole yeh once I didn't." He thrust his large, hairy hands in his pockets and stood thinking "at" the timid little driver such a time that the latter gradually snuggled very closely to the pole and attempted, as his brother had, to hide beneath his hat.

"Koy yong foy toi," called a high falsetto voice from the shed. The boy responded by cutting at the horse, for the steed had all but ceased to move at all. The stranger started, turned, and looked toward the place whence the voice had proceeded.

What he saw was a Chinese woman. She was evidently wife of the man who had gone to hunt in the rocks for more of the shells, and mother of the chaps of the hats. Before a ponderous revolving wheel of stone she was perched on a stool, a shell in her hands, holding it firmly and bearing it hard on the grinding surface, to polish the back. Her hands were grimy and streaked

with lines of sand and muddy water; her clothes were soiled; but her face was joyous and warmed with color, and she hummed at a Chinese melody in keeping with the rumbling of the stone. From time to time she dipped the shell in a can of muddy water near, when the grit departing showed a wondrous spot, jeweled with tints of the opal and ruby, where the hard and rough and apparently hopeless back of the house that once had harbored Señor Abalone, had succumbed to the polishing process.

The quick, hard eyes of the man turned hither and yon, from one of the curious objects in the shed to another. Fish, cut open and spread out flatly, were drying here and there against the walls; nets were draped from nails, or depended from the roofs in swags and pendents; baskets, of odd and often attractive designs, were piled together or strewn about on the ground; and near the woman was a tray with the two or three shells she could grind before the night.

Fifteen minutes the visitor stood, absorbing the sights and muttering observations to himself. The slightest of noises then attracted his gaze to the right, and he there beheld the first little lad he had seen, regarding himself with much timidity. From this one to the one astride the lever he looked alternately.

"Pair of aberlony twins," he hoarsely muttered. "Don't see what in hell they're doin' way up here. 'Spose they lug the bloody things to 'Frisco bye'm bye, to sell."

He walked to the shed to stand and watch the woman at her work. She ground for a time, seemingly oblivious of everything of earth. Sousing her shell in the water, she turned.

"Likee buy abalone? Velly plitty," she rehearsed in a voice a trifle softer than the voices of the lads. Then she added in a moment, "Velly plitty for mamma," and her whole supply of the English language was all but exhausted and done.

The citizen grinned. "Naw," said he, in a milder tone, "don't want 'um; not to-day." He started along the road, but paused to look at the place and nod his head approvingly. "Not so dang bad," he grumbled. The brown little chaps were gazing intently where he stood. "Bloody putty kids, them, dang 'um. What in heck they givin' me, anyhow?—'Plitty fer mamma'—dang 'um." Slowly walking, he entered the trees and plodded out of view.

The Chinaman, down on the jutting reef of rocks, hunted in patience, turning the smaller boulders, jumping from place to place, prying, twisting, and delving. The reef, so much and thoroughly searched, was seemingly barren of more of the creatures he sought.

For over an hour the tide had been low, and nothing made heavy the basket. Toiling somewhat blindly to turn a stubborn rock, he lost himself in the nearest approach to enthusiastic endeavor of which his kind is capable. Down came the rock when he almost had it toppling. His spear weapon was caught and held so firmly that none of his efforts availed to drag it forth.

Suddenly, just to the front, a large, flat-round surface, seen before but classified as rock, was slowly raised. A huge abalone was lifting its shell, not three long strides away.

Quickly, cunningly, abandoning spear and all, he glided forward and caught the shell abruptly, under the edge, with his long, bony fingers. A tug he gave, but with strange results; the shell closed powerfully down, with a quickness so amazing that his hands were caught, and held as if beneath a ponderous, immovable weight.

Crying aloud with pain and fright, he jerked and tore at the shell, to tear it away from the granite.

The rocks themselves had been easier to lift.

He thrashed, he screamed for help, but the abalone merely closed a trifle harder on the bones of all his fingers. Up and upwards lapped the fawning tide, swashing, seething, then retreating, as a creature playing with a victim. The roar of the breakers on the boulders of the beach drowned his cries as they boomed, and frothed, and rose upon the cliff.

The Chinese woman, as the wind increased, climbed from her stool, and trotted to the front of the house to look toward the sea. She knew it was past the time for the man to be returning. Only the gulls, however, that flapped on aimless wings, came up from the rocks.

Again she came in half an hour, to shield her eyes and scan the prospect far and wide. At length she ran to the edge of the cliff. A bending figure, struggling and screaming, was frothing the water that rose above its knees. The two little lads saw her run

to the trail, saw her slip from sight, and together they sat on the step of the door, hand in hand, to wait.

Louder and louder grew the voice of the sea. The wind was fresher, and the birds aloft went flapping and circling out and away. The horse at the lever hung his head and lifted a hoof. The long, soft hours of the warm afternoon glided uncounted away.

Sitting on the step, holding each to the wee bronze hand of the other, the two little fellows waited and waited.

The sun began at its low, western painting, splashing with red and gold the rifts in the huge cloudy masses. The long, gray horizon merged with the dark, leaden sky.

Walking rapidly, heavily, glancing often back, the dusty visitor of hours before abruptly appeared in front of the shanty.

"Hey," said he, looking rapidly about, "where's yer dad? Where's yer mammy?"

"Likee buy abalonee?" murmured one of the children, the two arising timidly; "velly plitty abalonee."

"Naw, yeh dang little shaver. Where's yer dad? I likee buy pants, boots." He brushed the two aside hurriedly and went within. The children moved in a backward, wistful manner to the stand, and took a shell apiece, in the hands disengaged, as if to guard the property.

The man came out again, muttering curses. He went to the cliff, to peer about, rapidly. Down in the rocks, tossed by the sea, was something floating. He gazed at it sharply — a long, still minute. Then back to the cabin he hurried.

"Yeh pore little devils," he said to the boys, "an' don't know nuthin' about it. Well, hang the luck, it's no biz of mine. An' some of them duds I've got tuh hev."

The little fellows watched him enter the house again, and both little grips were tightened on the shells.

It was dusky now, and the man, when he reappeared, clad in the garments of the Chinaman, was quickly clutched in an arm apiece of the anxious little boys.

"Hey — I ain't yer dad!" he blurted, starting.

With a silent gasp the small, round Chinese children edged away, to stand there wistfully looking in his face.

"Yeh pore little devils," he slowly repeated, "what'll yeh do?

May not be a wagon er nuthin' comin' by fer ten er fifteen days. Hang yer luck, yeh got tuh take yer chances, same as all of us. Putty little kids. If they's any good of wishes of sech as Billy Young, I wishes yeh luck."

He turned no less than seven times to see them standing in the fading light, and then the woods received him to the shadows.

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The moon that climbed above the trees, to silver-plate the grass and rocks, bestowed its glory on the shanty's front, and wantoned with the abalone mirrors on the stand, making a gleaming constellation there, shot with arrow beams of green and ruby lights. And searching about, the cold, white light found the two little lads sitting as before on the steps, their large brown eyes afraid of the stillness, yet their heavy heads nodding and nodding toward the realm of dreams. Each was holding still to the hand of his brother, each was clinging faithfully still to a shell.

The reddish horse had parted his harness and wandered away, feeding slowly as he went.

It was late in the night when the twigs and grass betrayed approaching steps.

"Yeh dang little kids," said the voice of the man who twice already had come to the place, "I couldn't git away. Hang yeh, anyhow — what in bloody thunder d'yeh mean by coddin' a tough 'bout his mother, hey? Here, yeh pore little cusses, we gotter shake this joint — most too near the bloody road — they might be somebody come — an' mebbe not. An' dang me, Johny, I'd starve meself, on nuthin' but rice an' hay."

He lifted the two frightened children till their clasping hands were held athwart his neck, and supporting each on a vigorous arm, strode away to the blackness of the forest.

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The morning dawned but slowly in the dense, chilly shade of the towering redwoods, and out of the chimney and the holes in the roof of the long-abandoned camp of hunters the thin blue smoke ascended lazily.

Bare of head, vigorously washed in the cold, bright spring, the man prepared a breakfast, and spread it on the rickety affair that answered for a table.

"What in heck's the matter, kids?" said he, "can't yeh go the bacon an' beans? Ain't yeh used to nuthin' but rice an' hay? Ain't scared, air yeh, kids? Nuthin' to make yeh scared of Billy Young. Guess yeh couldn't a slept too bloody hunky. What'll I do with yeh, anyhow?"

They swallowed dumbly, a trifle of the food he placed in their trembling mouths, but edged away to the basin hats at the earliest chance, their questioning eyes forever on the face of the man.

"Got 'er lie low a week, yeh see," he told them in confidence presently, "an' it's forty mile if I lugged yeh 'crost to Chinee Camp, to yer kind, an' 'crost every road in kingdom."

In the afternoon a drizzling rain descended. He placed the children in the blankets of his bunk and patched the roof. The two little fellows sat there slowly winking, their hats on their heads, holding each other still by the hand, grasping as ever the two bejeweled shells.

At night he piled the wood up high on the fire. Darkness came early, clinging, it seemed, to the falling drops of rain. He left them his coat, and wended his way through the dripping trees, miles and miles to the ocean.

The Chinese man's cabin was dark and silent in the rain. He loaded a sack with the rice and weeds, and floundered back through the gloom.

Yet the following day the tiny fellows of bronze were never a whit more eager to eat, never responsive with smiles or words.

"Say," said the man, "Billy Young ain't never hurt *yeu* little devils — never hurt yer mammy, neither. Couldn't yeh cod a tough ole cuss 'bout thet mamma racket, hey?"

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The trees and vines of a farm, in the black of night, ten good miles from the forest camp, he robbed of apples and grapes, to carry home to the wistful chaps. The dog was abroad; and running through the brush, the man was thrown and his ankle wrenched; but he limped away with the clumsy sack.

The ankle was swollen and red when at length he came to the cabin. The candle being lighted, he looked in the bunk. Sitting up as usual, blinking dumbly, the two little fellows regarded him in silence.

"See here, little mugs," he said to them tenderly, "nights is fer sleepin'. Yeh can't be healthy an' sit there thet a-way — an' never eatin' skasely a bite. Billy Young ain't a hull lot of shakes on singing songs, but I reckon he kin try, if yeh like." He cleared his throat and started several times. "Too high, I reckon," or "thet's too low," he muttered, until at length he struck a possible key.

"Way down upun the Swanee River,
Fur, fur away,
There's where muh heart — te dum
Te dumpty —
Dum — in the sweet by'm bye,"

he sang, time after time. At length the monotony soothed the children to a sort of hypnotic slumber, in which they sank slowly down in the blankets.

The week that followed saw the two little Chinese boys grow pale, thin, and faded. Their eyes seemed constantly increasing in size. The man, who lay for hours at a time racked by pain in the red and puffed-out ankle, watched them hopelessly, his eager eyes grown brilliant, his bearded face becoming thin and drawn.

"See here, my pore little babies," said he, "we got to git yeh down to Chinee Camp, with wimmin Chinees, er bust a leg."

He wrapped his ankle tightly about with long strips of cloth. A package of food he fastened to his belt.

It was night. Taking the children in his long, strong arms, their hands tightly clasped at the back of his neck, he limped away.

Over the ridges, down through the hollows, fording the ditches and climbing the cañons, he plodded on, singing his song and guarding the two from jolt and jar of the long and lonely journey.

At the fork of a road a post was standing, dim in the darkness of the coming dawn — a post with a placard, grayish white. Pausing here to rest, the traveler lighted a match and held it aloft. The face of the placard blanched in the glare, and black as holes were the letters of the printing on its surface.

REWARD.

Ten thousand dollars reward will be paid for the arrest of the "Lone Highwayman," who robbed the Molodero stage, Friday, September 30, at Sweeny's Bend. Man supposed to be "Billy Young," alias "Black Bill," alias "Shotgun Billy." Described as medium height, broad shoulders, short, black beard, steel-gray eyes. Above reward will be paid for apprehension and detention at Willow Grove. WELLS, FARGO & CO. EXPRESS.

"Kerrect," said the man, and limped away in the woods to lie in the brush for the passing of day.

Again in the night he staggered doggedly forward. Hills and valleys he slowly crossed. The dawn found him far from cover. Slowly limping, toiling hard for every step, he made for a hay-stack, standing erect in a field.

One of the children awoke at the touch of the hay. "Likee buy — abalonee?" he lisped in a whisper, feebly raising the shell he clutched; "velly — plitty; —you mamma — velly muchee — likee."

. . . . . .

Late in the afternoon the man awoke. His face, shaggy and haggard, came slowly up from the hay. He winked in the light heavily, gazing unmoved and unconcerned down the double muzzle of a shot-gun held at his head a yard away.

"Don't shoot, Jimmy," he hoarsely whispered, "the aberlony twins is a-sleepin'."

A second man came rudely up. "Huh," said he, "them Coolie kids air dead."

Wearily Billy Young extended his hands, and the captor slipped the cuffs of steel on the limp and careless wrists.